

## Valley View High School Graduation Project Student Handbook

Section 5.214(b) of the Pennsylvania Department of Education Curriculum Regulations require that all students beginning with the Class of 2001 complete a graduation project as a prerequisite to completing high school. The regulation states that..." A student shall complete a project in one or more areas of concentrated study which may include research, writing, or some other appropriate form of demonstration, is to assure that the student is able to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and communicate significant knowledge and understanding."

The preparation of the project itself will typically be a year-long effort, but may take more or less time depending on the student's ability, extent of the subject, and aggressiveness of his/her work. The project will have these components—writing of a research paper or project, preparing a demonstration product, and presenting the work to their peers and high school faculty mentor. For example, a student interested in social studies might write a paper on the Roman Empire, and construct a monument from the period. Another student might develop a paper about arranging music, compose a piece of music for an instrumental group, and perform the song in front of a panel of musicians. The possibilities are endless.

The general purpose of the project is to broaden the scope of a high school student's high school experience. It is performance based and adaptable to most topics of interest.

This handbook was developed as a means of assisting our students to understand and uniformly apply the procedures that have been developed for them.

### PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

A. All faculty members of the Valley View High School with the exception of the librarian will serve as mentors for the Graduation Project. The primary reason for this is to help evenly distribute the workload that will be required for the completion of this activity. The assignment of students will take place each year by the Guidance Department. Once a student is assigned a mentor, there can be no exchanges or exemptions from the pairings. The Guidance Office will keep an up-to-date list of mentor assignments and they will be posted in the Main Office at the time of scheduled mentor meetings throughout the school year. Students may work in groups (up to three students) for the **Project—Project Paper Option**. However, each student in the group must have their own paper which is different from the other group members. Students completing either the **Research paper Option** or the **Community Service Option** may NOT work in groups.

B. The Student's Duties

1. Meet all deadlines set by the mentor and the high school administration
2. Complete all forms properly and submit to your mentor during the mentor sessions.
3. Meet with your mentor when scheduled (you are required to meet with your high school mentor a minimum of four times).
4. Keep your parents/guardians informed about the project.
5. Read and become familiar with the project guidelines.
6. Complete all parts of the project.
7. Plan ahead and do not delay or put off the many responsibilities associated with completing the project. The Guidance Department and the High School Administration will inform parents/guardians when students are not meeting their responsibilities. Remember, if you do not complete your project by the date set by the high school administration, you will not participate in the graduation ceremonies nor will you receive your high school diploma until the project is completed.
8. Be careful in selecting your topics. Some topics are obviously inappropriate or unsafe. When in doubt, check with your mentor.

B. Project Timeline

Grade 9—Semester One—Freshmen are assigned mentors. Mentor meetings are held on a monthly basis throughout the school year. Four mentor meetings with assigned high school faculty mentor are required. Freshmen are encouraged to pick a topic and complete the Plan Sheet during their Freshman year. Once a topic is chosen, students must write a Letter of Intent to their mentor outlining the scope and purpose of their project. At this point, they are encouraged to begin working on the project. Further details on the process will follow.

### **GRADUATION PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The high school graduation project.....

- A. Provides students with an opportunity to formulate their own questions and find answers to them
- B. Provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate individual initiative.
- C. Permits the teacher to assess a student who is using other skills than those involved in written and oral tests.
- D. Gives students an opportunity to use concrete materials to express their ideas and talents.
- E. May raise the self-esteem of students.

- F. Provides choice, allowing students to pursue individual interests and possibly demonstrate otherwise hidden talents.
- G. Can be highly creative and motivating for students.
- H. Can become a powerful teaching tool.

## **OPTIONS—TYPES OF PROJECTS**

### **RESEARCH PAPER AND PRESENTATION**

Students completing this option will complete a ten-page (3000 words) type written double-spaced paper on a chosen topic of interest. The paper must be written in MLA format. It must include a title page, outline, and bibliography. It must include a minimum of three resources. The paper must NOT be one previously used for any classroom assignment. The presentation will be delivered to the student's mentor at a mentor meeting or individually. The student must also submit all of the other required project forms.

### **PROJECT PAPER, PROJECT, AND PRESENTATION**

Students completing this option will complete a three page paper containing at least one page each of the following: 1) research—cited within the paper and in a bibliography at the end of the paper, students must cite at least one resource related to their chosen topic (ex. Student working on project with children may cite research pertaining to developmental stage of children), 2) procedure—what they did—steps they followed to do their project, 3) reaction—what was learned from the project. The presentation will be delivered to the student's mentor at a mentor meeting or individually. The student must also submit all of the other required project forms. The project and paper must NOT be one previously used for any class assignment.

### **PROJECT PAPER, COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND PRESENTATION**

Students completing this option will complete a three page paper containing at least one page of each of the following: 1) research—cited within the paper and in a bibliography at the end of the paper, students must cite one resource related to their chosen topic (ex. Students volunteering to work with the elderly may cite a resource relating to this particular population, 2) procedure—a log containing a minimum of twenty-five hours of community service (may come from one site or more than one) and a detailed outline of what was done at each session, signed off by site supervisor, 3) reaction—what was learned from the experience. The presentation will be delivered to the student's mentor at a mentor meeting or individually. These students must still meet with their high school faculty mentor at the assigned meetings. The project and paper must NOT be one previously used for any class assignment. Some possible choices for community service include: American Cancer Society, Habitat for Humanity, United Neighborhood

Centers, Easter Seals, Humane Society of Lackawanna County, Lackawanna Association for the Blind, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, etc. Students are advised to check the *Sunday Scranton-Times* for a listing of available volunteer opportunities. The high school guidance office may also be utilized in helping students make volunteer connections.

## **SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER REGARDING COMPLETION OF RESEARCH**

When conducting research, it is important for the student to list the sources and persons who might contribute to it. Primary sources of information include interviews and surveys which students conduct themselves, a scientist's actual notes, a work of literature, and an autobiography. Secondary sources are textbooks, reference books, articles, literary criticism, and written material discussing any primary information. Students should be reminded that conducting research implies by its name that they will be exploring, investigating, discovering, and deciding something about the topic they have chosen.

One of the major problems students struggle with when they are writing research papers is when to cite and when not to cite a source of information. Many students do not understand that if information is paraphrased rather than directly quoted, **it still needs to be cited.**

## **EXAMPLES OF GRADUATION PROJECTS**

### **ART (VISUAL/GRAPHIC ARTS)**

- Production of a magazine or book
- Open show based on their own personal work (ex. Photo exhibit). This would require invitations, refreshments, and an article assessing their style related to other published photographers.
- Develop an advertising campaign for some member of the community. This would require research and final assessment as well as working with commercial printers.
- Design and assist a community member in the design of a home or commercial project. Conceptual work and then work with a professional in the development of the plans.
- Design and execute the interior renovation design of a room to include drawing, pricing, buying, and installation.
- Portfolio of work in a particular medium (any medium with a theme).
- Art historical themes (movements in art history).
- Study a particular artist and movement and create a series of works in that style.
- Design and execute a mural somewhere in the community that depicts a community theme.
- Photography—develop some type of photojournal or videojournal.
- Any needlework craft designed and completed in finished form.

## **PERFORMING ARTS**

- Do a one-person play concerning the life of an artist and be that artist.
- Write and direct an original production—design sets, etc.
- Music suite design.
- Compose, rehearse, perform, discuss, and explain a full-band piece.
- Design recording studio with equipment for the music department.

## **DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION**

- Evaluate and develop acoustic engineering in the auditorium.
- Outdoor sculpture.
- Building project to improve school facilities (ex. Nature trail, courtyard)
- Research recycling of objects (actual recycling of objects to a pure state and design an object to be made from the plastic, paper, etc.)
- Research, design, construct, evaluate, and possibly build one of the following: levitation transportation device, geodesic dome for a family of five, wind-powered transportation, structural device.
- Any construction using the materials of wood, leather, metal, plastic, ceramics, glass, rubber, or their combination.
- Any construction using the concepts of electronics, robotics, welding, hydraulic.
- Implements, devices, and accommodations or every day objects for the physically challenged.
- Design a house.
- Remodel a house or part of a house or building.

## **MACHINE/MECHANIC**

- Build a solar-powered vehicle or alternative power machine.
- Rebuild a gas engine vehicle.
- Machined project, such as a tool or other machine.

## **FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE**

- Nutrition and Food
- Food photography or food history
- Demonstrate culinary (cooking skills) cake decoration, pie baking, food sculpture, etc.
- Conduct a food science experiment.
- Prepare a puppet show to teach nutrition to elementary school children.
- Investigate techniques students in our school use to lose weight.
- Explore anorexia, bulimia, sports nutrition, prenatal nutrition, and irradiation of food.
- Research foods from another culture, region, or Lackawanna County.
- Follow food from farm to grocery store (prices, advertising, marketing, etc.)

## **Departmental Guidelines for Graduation Projects**

## **English**

### **1. Research Paper and Presentation**

The research paper must be written on an approved topic in any area of English. It must be completed using the current edition of MLA format. A topic should be selected that has not been examined in a previously assigned literary paper.

### **2. Project Paper with Project and Presentation**

The project must be on an approved English topic in any area of English. The project will be the work of the student, either independently or with pre-approved help from the community. The social, historical, and philosophical aspects of the project must be authentic.

The project paper will be a complete description of area of the project. It must contain the research, development, expense, problems, diagrams, charts, etc. involved in the project. Any research must be properly documented according to the MLA format.

The presentation should be an oral discussion of the project. It should discuss all the stages of developing the project, the process involved, and the final product. The student should take a scholarly approach in the presentation of the project/paper and be prepared to answer questions on its construction.

## **Social Studies**

When a student chooses a project in the Social Studies department, he/she will present a graduation project that will express his/her knowledge in a specific area of the social sciences. The subject may deal with the social, political, economic, or military aspects of social science and may include moral implications in the forms of various beliefs and traditions.

The project may be in the form of a research paper that would include the use of both primary and secondary sources and the student must make a five to ten minute oral presentation about the project before a selected panel of judges who ask questions regarding the subject.

The student's project may also be in the form of a tangible or intangible project that may be used for display and /or demonstration. The project would include a scholarly paper describing the project and the knowledge the student has gained; the project itself which may be a community project sponsored by a community mentor with the approval of a high school faculty mentor, and the presentation which will be a physical presentation in a media chosen by the student.

All aspects of the graduation requirement, including the social science subject, choice of a research paper or project, community mentor, and media must be approved by the student's mentor, prior to the beginning of the project.

## **Mathematics**

Students will have a choice of two options:

1. **OPTION A:** Research paper and Presentation
2. **OPTION B:** Project Paper and Project and Presentation

Under **OPTION A**, the *research paper* must be an approved mathematical topic in any area of mathematics. The student must be prepared to defend his/her paper when making his/her *presentation* to the mentor

Under **OPTION B**, the project chosen must also be on an approved mathematical topic in any area of mathematics. The *project paper* will contain a complete description of the project. The *project* itself will be constructed by the student, either independently or with the pre-approved help from the community. If the student secures mentor approval, the student may conduct or construct the project with the aid of a community mentor who must also be pre-approved. Both the high school mentor and the community mentor must verify the student's work on the project. Evidence of the work done must be presented to the high school mentor before the final *presentation*. This may be in the form of journals, logs, videos, photos, etc.

## **Science**

- 1) Research/Project Paper on approved scientific topic---any area of science, topic can deal with the social, political, moral, and industrial implications.
- 2) Independent Project—This shall consist of construction of an actual project accompanied by a written project paper stating the project objectives, rationale, and procedure followed in the construction. This can be used for display or demonstration.
- 3) Independent Research Project—This requires participation in the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science. This project must meet all of the required guidelines set by PJAS. The student must present the project at the Regional Meeting of the PJAS. Project areas include General Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology, Botany, Zoology, Chemistry, Physics, Earth and Space Science, Environmental Science, Computer Science, and Mathematics. (Presentation requirement with this option)
- 4) Community-Based Projects—Student participates in any scientific study with prior mentor approval, outside of school, i.e. Museum-based projects, Pennsylvania Archeology Society, 4H, PA Game Commission, Scouts, and NEIU projects. Another option is selected science opportunities and *Resources in Pennsylvania* (published by the PAS and PSBA). This shall consist of a full written report detailing the student's involvement and accomplishments along with written verification by sponsoring organization. A portfolio is required containing the proper documentation including secondary mentor verification, student logs, self-evaluation, and any physical evidence, i.e. video, photographs, scrapbook, etc.

## **Foreign Languages**

1. Level II—9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> grade (French, Italian, or Spanish) Travel log to a French, Italian, or Spanish speaking country.

Time Line:

- a) approved location and outline for project (direction to be followed) and establish time line (Phase I)
- b) meet with mentor as prescribed in Phase I
- c) Presentation to mentor

2. Video-Interview with Native Speaker

Phase I—Establish time-line and procedure with mentor (project approval)

Phase II—Meet with mentor as prescribed in Phase I

Phase III—Presentation to mentor

3. Foreign Language Camp—Marywood University

Criteria will be established when information is received from Marywood and NEIU-19.

## **Family and Consumer Science and Technology Education**

- 1) Research paper with presentation on approved topic
- 2) Project paper(on approved topic) explaining objective, rationale, and procedure with project and presentation

Areas:

Manufacturing and Production

Drafting

Foods

Child Development

Family Living

Consumerism

Design

Construction

Mechanics

Project can be:

\*\* 1) Independent or small group (depending upon topic)

\*\* 2) Community-based (requires secondary mentor verification, student logs, self-evaluation, and physical evidence, i.e. photos, video, etc.

\*\* Both of these require pre-approval

## **Health and Physical Education**

1. Research paper and Presentation

Extensive research of a health or fitness topic. Information may be accessed through hard copy, computers, videos, interviews with experts, and other appropriate sources. The paper must be completed using the MLA format.

## 2. Project Paper with Project and Presentation

Development and execution of a plan/program or experimental study related to the improvement of individual health, fitness, or sports skills. Examples: A stop smoking program, diet plan, fitness plan, strength improvement, sport skill development/improvement.

## 3. Community-Based Project with Portfolio and Presentation

The student will complete this project by working with a secondary mentor from within the community. The student must maintain a portfolio to chronicle his/her work. Examples: Work with a community health agency, health care facility, health care specialist, coach a youth sports team, become a PIAA certified sports official.

\*\*\*\*The presentation listed in all of the above health/phys.ed. options refers to an oral presentation which allows the student to apply or demonstrate mastery of his/her topic. The presentation shall consist of a five to seven minute speech. The use of audio-visual aids to support the presentation is encouraged.

## **Art**

Study a particular artist from a specific period (i.e. Impressionist) and create a series of works in that particular style.

Time Line:

- 1) Meet with student and discuss set up of criteria and time span for the completion of the series.
- 2) Research (in the form of a written paper) criteria by which the chosen artist developed his/her style (i.e. artist as critic, commissioned by church or state, defiance of the norm.....).
- 3) Discuss materials needed to complete the series of artwork.
- 4) Define a plan outlining the process for developing the series:
  - Theme
  - Number of pieces in the series
  - Sizes
  - Expected quality and finished presentation of each piece (matting, mounting, and framing)

## **Music**

- 1) Student would compose a work for at least four parts, either instrumentally or chorally. The student will rehearse their work and perform their work at the concert.
- 2) Student would choose a piece of music for the football field show. The student will design and teach all the field positions for the chosen song. The drill would be performed for the entire year.

The remaining pages of this handbook contain the required forms which must be completed by the student for the Graduation Project. These forms **should NOT** be removed from this book. Additional copies of these forms may also be downloaded on the high school's guidance webpage at [vvsd.neiu.k12.pa.us](http://vvsd.neiu.k12.pa.us) .

## GRADUATION PROJECT CHECKLIST

### Date Completed

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Meeting with guidance to explain the details of the graduation project.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Distribution and explanation of graduation project student handbook by guidance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Graduation Project Plan Form
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Mentor Meeting #1
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Mentor Meeting #2
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Mentor Meeting #3
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Mentor Meeting #4
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Parent Consent Form
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Letter of Intent
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Research or Project Paper completed
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Project or Community Service completed
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Presentation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Evaluation

## **Graduation Project Plan Sheet**

Area of Interest: \_\_\_\_\_

Option chosen: (check your choice)

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Research paper/presentation
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Project paper/project/presentation
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Community service/project paper/presentation

## Letter of Intent

Students will write a *Letter of Intent* to their mentor. This will be completed according to the following format:

Student Name  
Student Address  
Date

Mentor Name  
Valley View High School  
One Columbus Drive  
Archbald, PA 18403

Dear High School Faculty Mentor:

- Paragraph 1:* Describe your general area of interest, i.e. history, art, music, etc. and why you chose this area. Also explain what you already know or have accomplished in this area.
- Paragraph 2:* Describe your specific project, some of the ideas you hope to include and possible resources.
- Paragraph 3:* Outline you specific project's main components as timeline, human resources, potential cost, needed equipment, etc.
- Paragraph 4:* Describe how you are going to present your project (orally, visually, etc.)

Sincerely,

(sign your name here)

(type your name here)

**Graduation Project Parent Consent Form**

All students must have this form signed by their parent or guardian before completing the project.

I am aware that the Pennsylvania Department of Education has established a **Graduation Project** as a requirement for high school graduation. I am also aware that all students at the **Valley View High School** must satisfactorily complete this project (as outlined in this handbook). I understand that my son/daughter's topic is

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I agree to release the school district and its employees from all claims arriving from financial obligation incurred, or damage, or injury, or accident suffered while my son/daughter participates in the project he/she has chosen.

**Parent/Guardian Signature**\_\_\_\_\_

**Student Signature**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_





# VALLEY VIEW HIGH SCHOOL

## Graduation Project Score Sheet- Final Rating

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Project Topic \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Upon reviewing the contents of this project, its rating is the following:

Check rating:

Exceeds expectations (PASS) \_\_\_\_\_

Meets expectations (PASS) \_\_\_\_\_

Work still in progress\* (FAILURE) \_\_\_\_\_

\* Students will have opportunity to correct project so that it meets expectations.